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TARGET PRIORITIZATION TO  
OPTIMIZE EXPECTED UTILITY FOR  
A RANDOM BATTLE SCENARIO

DOUGLAS H. FRANK  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

ANN E. M. BRODEEN  
U.S. ARMY BALLISTIC RESEARCH LABORATORY

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The targeting process includes the development of a prioritized list specifying what targets are to be acquired and attacked, when they are to be acquired and attacked, and what resources are required to defeat the targets (U.S. Army Field Artillery School 1988).

In earlier research, target engagement orderings were designed to maximize a tactical outcome of a simple battle in which the friendly fire unit and each enemy target fired simultaneously (Frank 1988; Brodeen and Frank 1991). Here, battle outcome probabilities and optimal engagement orderings for a random battle are considered in a similar manner.

## 2. THE BATTLE

A single friendly fire unit and a group of enemy targets are engaged in a random battle. The random battle assumes each enemy target, as well as the friendly fire unit, fires independently and at a rate of fire that follows a single parameter negative exponential distribution but with possibly different mean rates and kill probabilities. Further, the single shot kill probabilities for the friendly fire unit and each enemy target, while constant from round to round, may also differ. Results given two enemy targets are derived first; these results are then extended to  $T > 2$  enemy targets.

2.1 Two-Target Battle. Consider the following parameters for targets  $i = 1, 2$ :

$P_{B_i}$  = probability of friendly fire unit removing target  $i$

$P_{R_i}$  = probability of friendly fire unit being removed by target  $i$

$B_i = \beta_i P_{B_i}$  = friendly fire unit firepower against target  $i$   
(vulnerability of target  $i$ )

where  $\beta_i$  = mean rate of fire of friendly fire unit against target  $i$

$R_i = \rho_i P_{R_i}$  = target  $i$  firepower against friendly fire unit  
(threat of target  $i$ )

where  $\rho_i$  = mean rate of fire of target  $i$  against friendly fire unit

It will be shown that the result of the classic stochastic duel can be extended to a battle between a single friendly fire unit and two enemy targets (Williams and Ancker 1963; U.S. Army Materiel and Development Readiness Command 1977). Assume target 1 is engaged until it is removed before target 2 is engaged. The battle concludes when either the friendly fire unit has been removed or it has removed both enemy targets. Removal is considered to be either the complete destruction or the infliction of a level of damage severe enough to abate the target's or the unit's contribution to its respective force. Victory is defined as the removal of both enemy targets regardless of whether the friendly fire unit survives.

If a weapon (which may be either an enemy target or the friendly fire unit),  $w$ , has a mean rate of fire,  $r$ , and a kill probability,  $p$ , then the probability of not killing the weapon in some time,  $h$ , is

$$Q_w(h) = e^{-rh}p. \quad (1)$$

Equation 1 will hereafter be referred to as **Lemma 1**. The following proof is offered.

Let  $X$  be the number of rounds fired during some time interval  $h$ , where  $X = 0, 1, 2, \dots, \infty$  (i.e., unlimited ammunition is assumed). Then,  $X$  has a Poisson distribution with mean  $rh$ . The single round probability of not being killed is  $(1 - p)$ .\*

$$\begin{aligned} Q_w(h) &= \sum_{x=0}^{\infty} \frac{e^{-rh}(rh)^x}{x!} (1-p)^x \\ &= e^{-rh} e^{rh(1-p)} \\ &= e^{-rh}p. \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

In a battle with two enemy targets, the probability of the friendly fire unit removing target 1 before being removed is

\* Lemma 1 was derived by applying the series expansion  $1 + m + \frac{m^2}{2!} + \frac{m^3}{3!} + \dots = \sum_{x=0}^{\infty} \frac{m^x}{x!}$ , which converges to  $e^m$ , for all values of  $m$ . Consider the function  $f(x)$  defined by  $f(x) = \frac{m^x e^{-rh}}{x!}$ , where  $m^x = [(rh)(1-p)]^x$  for  $x = 0, 1, 2, \dots$ , and  $f(x) = 0$ , elsewhere. For further discussion of the topic, the reader is referred to Hogg and Craig (1978).

$$P[1 \mid \text{NOT}] = \frac{B_1}{B_1 + R_1 + R_2}. \quad (3)$$

Equation 3 will be referred to as **Lemma 2** and is proved as follows. Divide the time of battle into units of length  $h$  and consider the Markov process formed (Bhattacharya and Waymire 1990; Kemeny and Snell 1960). From this process, the probability of the event occurring, where  $s$  is the number of rounds fired until a hit (i.e., kill) occurs, is

$$\begin{aligned} P_h[1 \mid \text{NOT}] &= ([1 - Q_{B_1}(h)]Q_{R_1}(h)Q_{R_2}(h)) \sum_{s=0}^{\infty} (Q_{B_1}(h)Q_{R_1}(h)Q_{R_2}(h))^s \\ &= \frac{[1 - Q_{B_1}(h)]Q_{R_1}(h)Q_{R_2}(h)}{1 - (Q_{B_1}(h)Q_{R_1}(h)Q_{R_2}(h))}. \end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

Applying **Lemma 1**,

$$P_h[1 \mid \text{NOT}] = \frac{e^{-h(\rho_1 P_{R_1} + \rho_2 P_{R_2})} - e^{-h(\beta_1 P_{B_1} + \rho_1 P_{R_1} + \rho_2 P_{R_2})}}{1 - e^{-h(\beta_1 P_{B_1} + \rho_1 P_{R_1} + \rho_2 P_{R_2})}}. \quad (5)$$

$$P[1 \mid \text{NOT}] = \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} P_h[1 \mid \text{NOT}] = \frac{\beta_1 P_{B_1}}{\beta_1 P_{B_1} + \rho_1 P_{R_1} + \rho_2 P_{R_2}} = \frac{B_1}{B_1 + R_1 + R_2}. \quad (6)$$

A detailed derivation of **Lemma 2** is presented in the appendix.

In a battle between the friendly fire unit and target 2, the probability of destroying target 2 is

$$P[2] = \frac{B_2}{B_2 + R_2}. \quad (7)$$

Equation 7 will be referred to as **Lemma 3** and is a well-known result (U.S. Army Materiel Development and Readiness Command 1977).

**Theorem 1** defines  $f(w)$ , where  $w$  is the number of targets destroyed. The density,  $f(w)$ , is

$$f(0) = \frac{R_1 + R_2}{B_1 + R_1 + R_2}, \quad f(1) = \frac{B_1 R_2}{(B_1 + R_1 + R_2)(B_2 + R_2)}, \quad (8)$$

$$f(2) = \frac{B_1 B_2}{(B_1 + R_1 + R_2)(B_2 + R_2)}.$$

The event  $w = 0$  is simply the complement of the event stated as **Lemma 2**. Similarly,

$$f(1) = P[1 | NOT] \cdot (1 - P[2]) \quad \text{and} \quad f(2) = P[1 | NOT] \cdot P[2]. \quad (9)$$

The results follow from **Lemmas 2 and 3**.

**2.2 Multitarget Battle.** Suppose there are  $T$  targets that are engaged in numerical order. Extend the definitions of  $B_i$  and  $R_i$  for  $i = 1, 2, \dots, T$ . Define

$$S_i = \sum_{j=1}^T R_j, \quad S_0 = 0, \quad \text{and} \quad B_0 = 1. \quad (10)$$

The proof of **Theorem 1** is easily generalized. If  $w$  is the number of targets removed in a battle with  $T$  targets, **Theorem 2** states that the density,  $f(w)$ , is

$$f(w) = \begin{cases} \left( \prod_{i=0}^w \frac{B_i}{B_i + S_i} \right) \cdot \frac{S_{w+1}}{B_{w+1} + S_{w+1}}, & \text{if } w < T \\ \prod_{i=1}^T \frac{B_i}{B_i + S_i}, & \text{if } w = T. \end{cases} \quad (11)$$

### 3. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Utility theory provides an apparatus for dealing with one-time decision making as well as a logical method for repetitive decision making. The term "utility," as conceived by von Neumann and Morgenstern (1947), is a measure of value used in the assessment of situations involving risk, which provides a basis for decision making. Different sets of axioms that imply the existence of utilities with the property that expected utility is an appropriate guide for consistent decision making are presented in von Neumann and Morgenstern (1947); Savage (1954); Luce and Raiffa (1957); Pratt, Raiffa, and Schlaifer (1965); and Fishburn (1970).

The objective of this study is to determine a value for each enemy target in terms of  $B_i$  and  $R_i$  such that if the targets are prioritized by their values, some optimal result is obtained. A target ordering is optimal when the expected value  $E[U]$  is maximized over all possible target orderings. Consider a utility function,  $U$ , defined on the variable,  $W$ , the number of enemy targets removed during the battle. In general,  $U(W)$  is nondecreasing,  $U(0) = 0$ , and  $U(T) = 1$ .

**3.1 Utility Based on Total Victory.** If the goal is to remove all enemy targets, where  $w = T$ , then maximize  $f(T)$ .

$$U_1(W) = \begin{cases} 0, & \text{if } W < T \\ 1, & \text{if } W = T. \end{cases} \quad (12)$$

Recalling **Theorems 1 and 2**,  $f(T) = \frac{B_1 \dots B_T}{(B_1 + S_1) \dots (B_T + S_T)}$ . Since the numerator is the same for all permutations, the quantity,  $\prod_{i=1}^T (B_i + S_i)$  must be minimized in order to maximize  $f(T)$ .

**3.2 Utility Based on the Number of Hits.** If hitting all the targets is not essential, and all targets seem equally important, then to maximize the number of targets removed

$$U_2(W) = \frac{W}{T}. \quad (13)$$

For utility two, maximize  $\sum_{w=0}^T \frac{W}{T} \cdot f(w)$ , the expected value of  $U_2(W)$ , where  $f(w)$  was developed in Section 2.1.

**3.3 Utility Based on a Reduction in Threat.** **Lemma 2** shows that the combined threat of an array of targets acting as a single target is the sum of their individual threats. Consequently, in removing  $w$  targets, the overall threat is reduced from  $S_i$  to  $S_{w+1}$ .

$$U_3(W) = 1 - \frac{S_{w+1}}{S_i}, \quad (14)$$

where  $S_{T+1} = 0$  by definition. Note that  $U_3(W)$  depends on the target engagement ordering chosen, whereas utilities 1, 2, and 4 do not.

**3.4 Utility Based on a Reduction in Force.** In many battles, the enemy can be halted when it loses only a small proportion of its forces. In these cases, an inflective utility seems appropriate. For convenience, consider an extreme example of an inflective function

$$U_4(W) = \begin{cases} 0, & \text{if } W \leq .3T \\ 1, & \text{if } W > .3T. \end{cases} \quad (15)$$

A commander may specify the type of effects he desires against specific target categories. The authors' current approach to TVA accounts for the complete removal of an enemy target; the selection of .3 was based accordingly on the definition of destruction, one of three target effects categories. Destruction is designed to put a target out of action permanently, and 30% casualties or materiel damage will usually render a target permanently ineffective (Headquarters Department of the Army FM 6-40 1984).

#### 4. VALUES BASED ON TWO TARGETS

Given two enemy targets, there are only two possible orderings: 1,2 or 2,1. The utility,  $U$ , will be determined by  $U(1)$ , the utility associated with removing one target. A generic target value algorithm for all utility functions will be derived, and the four special cases from Section 3 will be examined.

**4.1 General Optimal Results.** Suppose  $U(1) = c$ , is the same for either target ordering. Let  $E_1[U]$  and  $E_2[U]$  be the expected utilities for the orderings 1,2 and 2,1, respectively. We might ask, "Under what conditions is the initial ordering 1,2 better than the ordering 2,1?" From **Theorem 1**

$$E_1[U] = \frac{B_1(cR_2 + B_2)}{(B_1 + R_1 + R_2)(B_2 + R_2)}$$

and

$$E_2[U] = \frac{B_2(cR_1 + B_1)}{(B_2 + R_1 + R_2)(B_1 + R_1)}. \quad (16)$$

Setting  $E_1[U] > E_2[U]$  and simplifying, an inequality concerning the threat and vulnerability of each target is obtained.

We now state **Theorem 3**.  $E_1[U] > E_2[U]$  if and only if

$$\frac{B_1(B_1 + R_1)}{(B_1 + S_1)(cR_1 + B_1)} > \frac{B_2(B_2 + R_2)}{(B_2 + S_1)(cR_2 + B_2)}, \quad (17)$$

where  $S_1 = R_1 + R_2$  represents total enemy firepower in the case of two enemy targets. Should the inequality not hold, that is,  $E_2[U] > E_1[U]$ , the ordering 2,1 becomes the new 1,2 target engagement ordering.

**Theorem 3** provides a generic target value algorithm (i.e., all parameter subscripts removed) for some utility  $c$ . The value of a target with threat  $R$  and vulnerability  $B$  relative to a utility  $c$  is

$$\frac{B(B + R)}{(B + S)(cR + B)}. \quad (18)$$

The shortcomings of this definition are the presence of  $S$ , which depends on the entire enemy target array, and the limitation to utilities that are independent of target orderings. In the case of two enemy targets, one approach is to replace  $S$  by  $2R$ , where  $S$  could be based upon knowledge about target 1 only, thereby degenerating to some average target threat. This is not recommended, in general, since optimality is not guaranteed. It will be shown that in some of the special cases that an equivalent value without  $S$  can be obtained.

To overcome the second objection, if the value of  $U(1)$  for an ordering could be expressed in terms of the second target to be removed, the target value algorithm could be redefined by interpreting the utility,  $c$ , as the utility when the target is the second one to be removed.

**4.2 Value for Utility One.** Recall the assumption  $U(1) = c$ . For utility 1,  $U_1(W) = 0$  if  $W < T$ . For example, when  $W = 1$  and  $T = 2$ ,  $U_1(1) = 0$ . Thus, for utility 1,  $c = 0$  when only one target is removed, and the generic target value algorithm reduces to  $\frac{B + R}{B + S}$ . It can be shown that  $\frac{B_1 + R_1}{B_1 + S} > \frac{B_2 + R_2}{B_2 + S}$ , if and only if  $R_1(B_1 + R_1) > R_2(B_2 + R_2)$ . This lends itself to the following definition of a value for utility 1:

$$VAL1 = R(B + R). \quad (19)$$

In the two target case, a target engagement ordering based on  $VAL1$  will maximize  $E[U1]$ .

Notice that threat,  $R$ , impacts  $VAL1$  more than does the target's vulnerability,  $B$ . This is evident by the inclusion of a quadratic  $R$  term in the algorithm in addition to the linear  $R$  and  $B$  terms. From this, one might infer that if the objective were to remove both enemy targets, it is in one's interest to remove the more threatening target first.

**4.3 Values for Utilities Two and Three.** It is easily seen that for utility 2,  $c = 1/2$ , when  $W = 1$  and  $T = 2$ . No simplification can be made of the generic target value algorithm for this case, therefore

$$VAL2 = \frac{B(B+R)}{(B+S)(1/2R+B)}. \quad (20)$$

Target orderings based on VAL2 will maximize  $E[U2]$ . VAL2 can also be written as

$$\frac{B}{B+S} \left( 1 + \frac{R}{R+2B} \right)$$

or

$$\frac{2B}{R+2B} \left( \frac{1}{1 + \frac{S-R}{B+R}} \right),$$

but neither of these forms leads toward the elimination of S.

In the case of utility 3, the value of  $c = 1 - (R/S)$ ; therefore, the generic target value can be written in the following manner:

$$VAL3 = \frac{BS(B+R)}{(B+S)(RS+BS-R^2)}. \quad (21)$$

No equivalent form without S is apparent.

**4.4 Value for Utility Four.** Given two targets,  $c = 0$  for utility 4. The interest is in minimizing the probability of no hits. Intuitively, this occurs when  $B_1 > B_2$ , that is, when the most vulnerable, or easiest, target is removed first

$$VAL4 = B. \quad (22)$$

The case of two (or three) enemy targets should be regarded as a limiting case. If the functional form for utility four is applied directly, when  $T = 2$  and  $W = 1$ , then  $1 > .3(2)$  and  $U_4(W)$  should be equal to 1. However, since only the complete removal of an enemy target is accounted for, no fractional damage, the analyses of the utility functions are discrete. Therefore, it can be assumed that  $.3T$  has a lower limit of 1. Given this assumption,  $W \leq .3T$ ; that is,  $1 \leq 1$  and  $U_4(W)$  is equal to 0. The same rationalization holds for  $T = 3$ .

## 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

It was shown that general optimal results for a two target random battle could be derived from the expected values of the utilities associated with the two possible target engagement orderings. Theorem 3 outlined a generic target value algorithm relative to some utility  $c$ . Four target value algorithms based on a priori defined utility functions were reported.

The successful application of stochastic processes to the random battle TVA problem is an indication that this avenue of approach to TVA should be continued. Several areas warranting further investigation have been identified. First, what is the impact on the algorithms developed thus far if fractional damage to an enemy target is considered? The current research has concentrated solely on the complete removal, or kill, of a target. This also suggests future analysis of utility functions would no longer be discrete, but continuous. Second, what is the impact if the friendly fire unit's damage is also assessed in a fractional form, not simply as whether or not it survived? Third, and possibly the most important area of investigation, what is the impact of enemy target identification/ recognition on the target values algorithms?

Commander's guidance is to be respected; however, it should still be categorized as an arbitrary process. The primary objective of any sound TVA methodology should be to provide a means by which to minimize the judgmental aspect of this guidance. The selling point of the authors' research is its direct military wide application. For example, within the Army, the algorithms are as applicable to air defense as to the field artillery, and within the field artillery equally applicable whether the targets belong to the maneuver commander or to intelligence.

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**APPENDIX:  
DERIVATION OF LEMMA 2**

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Lemma 2 states: given the friendly fire unit is engaging two enemy targets, the probability of the friendly fire unit removing the first target before being removed is

$$P[1 | \text{NOT}] = \frac{B_1}{B_1 + R_1 + R_2}.$$

The proof of Lemma 2 goes as follows. The time of battle is divided into units of length  $h$  and a Markov process is formed (Bhattacharya and Waymire 1990; Kemeny and Snell 1960). The geometric distribution is utilized to describe the probability of the event occurring, where  $s$  is the number of rounds fired before the first hit occurs and  $s = 0, 1, 2, \dots, \infty$ .\*

$$P_h[1 | \text{NOT}] = ([1 - Q_{B_1}(h)]Q_{R_1}(h)Q_{R_2}(h)) \sum_{s=0}^{\infty} (Q_{B_1}(h)Q_{R_1}(h)Q_{R_2}(h))^s.$$

To evaluate  $\sum_{s=0}^{\infty} (Q_{B_1}(h)Q_{R_1}(h)Q_{R_2}(h))^s$ , consider the infinite series  $\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} x^n = 1 + x + x^2 + x^3 + \dots + x^n + \dots$  which converges to  $\frac{1}{1-x}$ . Therefore, the summation converges to

$$\frac{1}{1 - (Q_{B_1}(h)Q_{R_1}(h)Q_{R_2}(h))},$$

and

$$P_h[1 | \text{NOT}] = \frac{[1 - Q_{B_1}(h)]Q_{R_1}(h)Q_{R_2}(h)}{1 - (Q_{B_1}(h)Q_{R_1}(h)Q_{R_2}(h))}.$$

Recalling Lemma 1, where  $Q_w(h) = e^{-hp}$  is the probability of killing a weapon (friendly or enemy) in some time frame  $h$ , then

\* For this application, the geometric distribution refers to the number of failures observed before the first success (i.e., hit) is obtained.

$$Q_{B_1}(h) = e^{-h\beta_1 P_{B_1}}, \quad Q_{R_1}(h) = e^{-h\rho_1 P_{R_1}}, \quad \text{and} \quad Q_{R_2}(h) = e^{-h\rho_2 P_{R_2}}.$$

By substitution,

$$\begin{aligned} P_h[1 | \text{NOT}] &= \frac{[1 - e^{-h\beta_1 P_{B_1}}] e^{-h\rho_1 P_{R_1}} \cdot e^{-h\rho_2 P_{R_2}}}{1 - (e^{-h\beta_1 P_{B_1}} \cdot e^{-h\rho_1 P_{R_1}} \cdot e^{-h\rho_2 P_{R_2}})} \\ &= \frac{e^{-h(\rho_1 P_{R_1} + \rho_2 P_{R_2})} - e^{-h(\beta_1 P_{B_1} + \rho_1 P_{R_1} + \rho_2 P_{R_2})}}{1 - e^{-h(\beta_1 P_{B_1} + \rho_1 P_{R_1} + \rho_2 P_{R_2})}} \\ &= \frac{e^{-h(\rho_1 P_{R_1} + \rho_2 P_{R_2})} [1 - e^{-h(\beta_1 P_{B_1})}]}{1 - e^{-h(\beta_1 P_{B_1} + \rho_1 P_{R_1} + \rho_2 P_{R_2})}}. \end{aligned}$$

Then

$$\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} P_h[1 | \text{NOT}] = \frac{\left[ \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} e^{-h(\rho_1 P_{R_1} + \rho_2 P_{R_2})} \right] \left[ \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} (1 - e^{-h(\beta_1 P_{B_1})}) \right]}{\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} (1 - e^{-h(\beta_1 P_{B_1} + \rho_1 P_{R_1} + \rho_2 P_{R_2})})}.$$

Since  $\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} e^{-h(\rho_1 P_{R_1} + \rho_2 P_{R_2})} = 1$ , the first term can be dropped leaving

$$\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} P_h[1 | \text{NOT}] = \frac{\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} (1 - e^{-h(\beta_1 P_{B_1})})}{\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} (1 - e^{-h(\beta_1 P_{B_1} + \rho_1 P_{R_1} + \rho_2 P_{R_2})})}.$$

By the series expansion,  $e^x - 1 = x + \frac{x^2}{2!} + \frac{x^3}{3!} + \dots$ , then

$$\begin{aligned}
\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} P_h[1 | \text{NOT}] &= \frac{\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} - \left[ (-h\beta_1 P_{B_1}) + \frac{(-h\beta_1 P_{B_1})^2}{2!} + \frac{(-h\beta_1 P_{B_1})^3}{3!} + \dots \right]}{\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} - \left[ (-h(\beta_1 P_{B_1} + p_1 P_{R_1} + p_2 P_{R_2})) + \frac{(-h(\beta_1 P_{B_1} + p_1 P_{R_1} + p_2 P_{R_2}))^2}{2!} \right.} \\
&\quad \left. + \frac{(-h(\beta_1 P_{B_1} + p_1 P_{R_1} + p_2 P_{R_2}))^3}{3!} + \dots \right] \\
&= \frac{\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \left( -h\beta_1 P_{B_1} + \frac{h^2 \beta_1^2 P_{B_1}^2}{2!} - \frac{h^3 \beta_1^3 P_{B_1}^3}{3!} + \dots \right)}{\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \left[ (-h(\beta_1 P_{B_1} + p_1 P_{R_1} + p_2 P_{R_2})) + \frac{(-h(\beta_1 P_{B_1} + p_1 P_{R_1} + p_2 P_{R_2}))^2}{2!} \right.} \\
&\quad \left. + \frac{(-h(\beta_1 P_{B_1} + p_1 P_{R_1} + p_2 P_{R_2}))^3}{3!} + \dots \right] .
\end{aligned}$$

Dividing through by  $-h$  and taking the limits,

$$\begin{aligned}
\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} P_h[1 | \text{NOT}] &= \frac{\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \left( \beta_1 P_{B_1} - \frac{h \beta_1^2 P_{B_1}^2}{2!} + \frac{h^2 \beta_1^3 P_{B_1}^3}{3!} + \dots \right)}{\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \left[ (\beta_1 P_{B_1} + p_1 P_{R_1} + p_2 P_{R_2}) - \frac{h(\beta_1 P_{B_1} + p_1 P_{R_1} + p_2 P_{R_2})^2}{2!} \right.} \\
&\quad \left. + \frac{h^2 (\beta_1 P_{B_1} + p_1 P_{R_1} + p_2 P_{R_2})^3}{3!} + \dots \right] \\
&= \frac{\beta_1 P_{B_1}}{\beta_1 P_{B_1} + p_1 P_{R_1} + p_2 P_{R_2}} \\
&= \frac{B_1}{B_1 + R_1 + R_2} .
\end{aligned}$$

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